



Washington State Legislature

November 3, 2011

Ted Sturdevant
Director, Washington State Department of Ecology
PO Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504

Pete Kremen
Whatcom County Executive
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 108
Bellingham, WA 98225

Re: Gateway Pacific Terminal site at Cherry Point

Dear Sirs,

We are writing to ask that the agencies directing the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review determine that directly associated impacts, such as those from associated transportation, be considered a part of the "proposal" within the required State Environmental Protection Act analysis.

Many in our respective communities throughout Washington State have contacted us regarding the proposal to significantly increase rail traffic with shipments of coal to a new terminal at the Gateway Pacific Terminal site at Cherry Point.

Many have expressed a concern for public safety and impacts to our quality of life posed by additional rail runs through our communities each day. Others have cited worries about the impact these runs will have on local businesses. Still others have questioned why we would choose to promote the use of coal as a fuel source anywhere, whether here at home or across the ocean. Lastly, we have heard from many regarding the impact to public health from increased particulate matter as a result of the use of diesel fuel on rail runs. Recently, more than 100 physicians in Whatcom County have united to oppose this project based upon this possibility. We share these concerns.

As this project gains speed, our constituents continue to look to us for answers about the consequences – ecological, fiscal and physical – that the increased rail traffic and transportation of coal may have in their local communities.

This fall the Department of Ecology and Whatcom County must determine the scope of the environmental, health and safety review of this project beyond the terminal footprint itself. The review should consider the full impact to local communities of statewide transportation of up to 54 million tons of coal.

We must be fully aware of potential economic tradeoffs associated with this increased level of transportation. Small and large businesses along rail lines in communities from Spokane, to central Washington to Bellingham could be negatively impacted by significantly increased numbers of rail runs transecting their communities.

It is important that the formal evaluation of the project include the associated impacts to the communities and not just impacts at the actual site.

We have much hope that the agencies will keep the well-being of our local communities at the forefront of their concerns. When it comes to a project of this magnitude we owe it to our communities to determine how progress will affect them.

Sincerely,

Senator Kevin Ranker

Senator Dan Swecker

Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles

Senator Ed Murray

Senator Karen Fraser

Senator Sharon Nelson

Senator Nick Harper

Senator Paull Shin

Senator Debbie Regala

Senator Adam Kline

Senator Steve Conway

Senator Maralyn Chase

Senator Karen Keiser